

SOLOMON's *Preference of Wisdom considered:*
And particularly recommended to the Atten-
tion and Regard of young People.

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BEING THE
Annual S E R M O N

Preached at

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By EDWARD PICKARD.

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L O N D O N :

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1 KINGS, Ch. iii. Ver. 9, 10.

Give therefore thy Servant an understanding Heart to judge thy People, that I may discern between good and bad : For who is able to judge this thy so great a People ? And the Speech pleased the Lord, that Solomon had asked this Thing.

WE have in several Places, Accounts given us of the Care which *David* took, to instil betimes into the Mind of his Son *Solomon*, a Principle of Piety ; a serious Regard to the Presence and Authority of God : As what would be the surest Foundation of his own personal Prosperity ; and of a glorious, useful, and happy Reign. This he renewedly charges upon him ; and especially towards the Close of his own Life ; that so coming from him as his dying Charge, it might have the greater Force. Of this we have a striking Instance in 1 *Chron.* xxviii. 9 ; where (after a fervent Address to the Heads of the Tribes, and his Civil and Military Officers, recommending Obedience to God, and Loyalty to his Son *Solomon*) he turns him-

self to *him*: And with a pathetic Affection and Earnestness, charges him in the following solemn Words; recommending with the Authority and Tenderneſs of a Father, a ſincere and unfeigned Piety; *And thou Solomon my Son, know thou the God of thy Father; and ſerve him with a perfect Heart and a willing Mind*: And enforcing it with very weighty Motives: *for the Lord ſearcheth all Hearts; and underſtandeth the Imaginations of the Thoughts: If thou ſeek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forſake him, he will caſt thee off forever.* A great Example this for all Parents to follow! What they owe to God! and to their Children too! And which, if they ſincerely wiſh their Happineſs, and know wherein Happineſs conſiſts; they will not flight or neglect! And let me obſerve, that inculcating this Principle of Piety, *the Knowledge and reverential Fear of God*, is the firſt and moſt obvious Beginning of a good Education. Not only as it is moſt eaſily diſcerned, and will be moſt ſtrongly felt; but as it is in itſelf the moſt important; and in its Tendency the moſt powerful to reſtrain and regulate the Paſſions, to overbalance and conquer Temptations, and to produce and ſecure univerſal Virtue. The good Effects of this early pious Care we find in *Solomon*: Who after he came to the Throne, retained the good Impreſſions made upon him hereby: for it is ſaid of him (a), *that he loved*

the Lord, walking in the Statutes of David his Father. And to *this* it was owing, that he made the Choice and Preference which I shall now propose to your Consideration: And hope, through God's Blessing, not only to engage your Applause and Admiration of it, but to lead you to an Imitation: That is, *To prefer true Wisdom before Riches, Honours, long Life, or any Thing else that the World offers to your Choice and Acceptance.* In order to which it may be proper,

- I. To lay before you the Account here given of *Solomon's Choice*: And point out some remarkable Circumstances attending it. And,
- II. To accommodate it to the immediate Intention of this Day's Service.

I. I would lay before you the Account here given of *Solomon's Choice*; with the Circumstances attending it that claim your Observation.

We are told *(b)* that *Solomon went to Gibeon to sacrifice there*: Which he performed with great Solemnity and Expence. There *the Lord appeared to him in a Dream by Night*. And as an Acknowledgment of his Piety, *bid him ask what he would, and it should be granted him (c)*. In what Manner he thus appeared and spoke

(b) Ver. 4. *(c)* Ver. 5.

to him, is not to my Purpose to enquire now. It is sufficient to observe, that *Solomon* was convinced of the Appearance and Voice being from God. After great and just Acknowledgments of the Divine Goodness to his Father and himself, in raising them to the Throne of *Israel*, he proceeds to make his Choice and Request: Which as well for the Manner, as the Matter of it, deserves the highest Commendation and Regard. From a just Sense of his own Inexperience and Inability, of the Honour to which he was advanced, and of the important Trust committed to him, he begs of God, *to give him that Degree of Wisdom and Understanding, that would supply his own Defects; and qualify him for the right Discharge of the Office, with which he was invested.* The Petition itself you may read (*d*): The Sense of which I shall endeavour to give you in the following Paraphrase. “ I
 “ acknowledge, O Lord, the Honour thou
 “ hast done me in appointing me King in the
 “ Room of *David* my Father, whose great
 “ Example I have ever before my Eyes. I am
 “ sensible of the Difficulty I lie under in succeeding so great a Prince, in the Execution
 “ of so great a Trust. I feel and confess my
 “ own Inexperience and Unfitness heretofore:
 “ My Youth exposes me to many Mistakes
 “ which I would gladly avoid: Nor am I so
 “ solicitous about the external Emoluments

(*d*) Ver. 7, 8, 9

“ and

“ and Splendour of a Crown, as to fulfil the
 “ Duties of this high Office with Honour and
 “ Usefulness. Grant therefore to thy Servant,
 “ such a right Apprehension, sound Judgment,
 “ and true Discernment, that I may always
 “ distinguish between Right and Wrong ; ad-
 “ minister Justice and Equity impartially ;
 “ promote the Good and Happiness of thy
 “ People ; and *thus*, faithfully act up to the
 “ wise and important Ends for which thou hast
 “ advanced me.”

This was the Choice and Request *He* made !
 Who is there that reads or hears it, without
 admiring and being charmed by it ! The next
 Verses tell us, that it was peculiarly acceptable
 to God : Who, in Reward of it, not only
 assured him of the Thing he asked ; but pro-
 mised him moreover, the inferior Blessings of
 Riches and external Honour above any other :
 and a long Life to enjoy them, upon his Con-
 tinuance in the pious Course, in which he had
 set out (*e*). Here then is an Instance of true
 Greatness of Mind and Goodness of Heart ! that
 could comparatively despise the Things, which
 in the general Estimate bear too great a Sway ;
 and which most, it is to be apprehended,
 would in his Circumstances have given the
 Preference to ! And, unmoved with the Dazzle
 of Riches and external Grandeur, deaf to the
 Sollicitations of the baser Passions, to the Calls

(*e*) Ver. 11, 12, 13, 14.

of Ambition, the Cravings of Sensuality, the Dictates of Pride, and Revenge, which he might now have shewn at least a Disposition to gratify, he nobly scorns them all! And makes no other Advantage of a particular Favour shewn him, than to ask for himself that Knowledge and Wisdom, which would make him faithful to God, and qualify him for Usefulness in the Station in which Providence had placed him!

This is the Choice itself. And the Circumstances which I shall point out attending upon it are these that follow, which are worthy our Observation.

First, What it was that procured him this signal Mark of God's Favour.

And that was his good Disposition. Particularly, *his Piety towards God*. This entered into his general Character: For that given of him is that *he loved the Lord*. And he was now engaged in a particular Instance of it, which brought him to Gibeon *where the Lord appeared to him*. Here he found remarkably verified what his Father had told him to engage him to the Fear of God; *if thou seek him he will be found of thee*. The Way for us to expect the Tokens of the Divine Favour, the Guidance of Divine Wisdom is, to wait upon God in the sincere and conscientious Discharge of the Duties we owe to him. And if we leave God out of our Thoughts and Regards, we have no Reason to expect any Instances
of

of particular Favour from him. And I think I may fairly add, that not only his Piety towards God, but *his Sense of Honour and Duty to his Parents*, was another Thing that recommended him so particularly to the Divine Regard. I am justified in this Remark, as it is mentioned, *(f)* *that he walked in all the Statutes of David his Father*. And this made a Part of *Solomon's* general Temper and Character: For we find him, *(g)* treating his Father's Memory with great Respect: And we have a remarkable Instance of the Reverence and Esteem with which he behaved to his Mother *(h)*. And indeed true Piety towards God will be always productive of Honour and Obedience to Parents. And *these* united form a Character highly pleasing and acceptable to God.

2dly. Another Circumstance which I would point out to you attending this Choice and Request of *Solomon* is, his modest Opinion of, and humble Diffidence with Regard to, himself.

This indeed was the very Foundation of his Request: A Conviction of his Need of Wisdom more than his own: A just Sense of his own Imperfections: A becoming Distrust of his own Abilities: In Opposition to that supercilious Pride and Self-sufficiency; which thinks itself equal to every Thing; and admits of no Suspicions of itself; desires no Advice or Cautions from others. *Solomon's* Temper was the

(f) ver. 3. *(g)* ver. 6. *(h)* Ch. 2. ver. 19.

Reverse of this. He had a just Sense of the great Trust committed to him, of the superior Abilities requisite to it; and suspected his own as not sufficient: And this led him to ask Wisdom and Understanding. This he expresses in the following Words, *I am but a little Child; I know not how to go out or to come in (i)*. And yet it is observable, that he *even then* excelled most of his Age in Wisdom; and that *really*, as well as in the Opinion of a fond Father (*k*). Modesty and Diffidence are no Signs of Folly and Ignorance, but the contrary. And he that knows himself most, and has a just Sense of Duty and Character, will always be the most humble; the most desirous of further Wisdom; the most ready to receive the Counsel and Advice of others. And this is a very amiable Quality: And not only led *Solomon* to *ask* Wisdom of God, but disposed him to *receive* it; and recommended him in so particular a Manner to the Divine Regard.

3dly. I would also point out to you, that just and becoming Sense which *Solomon* had upon his Mind, of the Nature and Design of the Power, to which God had advanced him.

He considered it, not barely as intended for his own Grandeur and Splendor; or as an Instrument to his own Pleasure and Ambition: And therefore he did not ask, or principally seek Riches, Honours, or Victory over his E-

(i) ver. 7.

(k) Ch. 2. ver. 9.

nemies. But he considered it, as a *Trust reposed in him for the Good of others*: And therefore requested *Wisdom* to discharge it aright. In this he shewed a truly public Spirit; a just Sense of his own Value and Importance; and of the great End of human Life and Abilities. And *thus* should we enter upon Life; and consider the Capacities God has given us: Forming our Designs upon this generous Plan. Should remember, that we are not made for ourselves alone; but in the strongest Connections with others: That every one of us has a Place to fill up; a Trust to discharge: That others have an Interest in, a Claim upon us: That whatever Weight, by Power or Wealth, by Birth or Station, we have, is *given* us not for self-gratification alone, but with a View to others. And therefore we should in the first Place pray and desire, that God would give us that *Wisdom* and those Abilities, which will qualify us to act with Faithfulness and Usefulness, in whatever Station his Providence shall place us.

4thly. I would lead you to consider, *Solomon's* Age and Situation, when he made this Choice and Request.

He was a young Man, and a King. From all Circumstances it is most probable, that he was at this Time, something above twenty Years of Age. A Time of Life when Vanity and self-sufficiency are apt to prevail! And for Want of more Knowledge and more Experience, Persons are ready to imagine, they know every Thing, are equal to any Thing! A Time,

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when the Passions are very lively; the World has its strongest Charms; and Gaiety, Pleasure and Honour have a forcible Attraction! And especially when the Situation is such, as to give *these* all their Force and Advantage! And there is a great Accession of Wealth and Power; which at any, especially at *that* Time of Life, are apt to corrupt the Judgment; to feed Pride and Vanity; and to minister Fuel to Conceit, Ambition and Luxury! It was *then* that *Solomon* gave this Preference to Wisdom, before Riches, Honours, or the Lives of his Enemies! And *this* renders his Choice the more wonderful, and his Character very amiable. These Dispositions at such a Time of Life, are the most promising Symptoms of a wise and good Character. Such are the peculiar Favourites, the *Sons* of Wisdom! are disposed to imbibe her Principles, to receive her Maxims! *These* are necessary Qualifications to be initiated into her School! *These* recommend to the Esteem of the Wise and Worthy! And, which is of the greatest Importance, engage the Approbation and Favour of the God of all Wisdom, the Dispenser of every other Blessing! And this is another Circumstance I would have you attend to: namely,

5^{thly}, The signal Evidence that God gave of his Approbation of it.

This was very honourable and advantageous for *Solomon*: And shewed the Wisdom and Happiness of the Choice he had made. God gave him not only a superior Measure of that
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Wisdom and Understanding which he had asked, but superadded the inferior Blessings of Wealth and Honour, which he had so generously despised in Comparison with the former. And indeed those who make Wisdom their first Choice, are alone fit to be trusted with Wealth and Power; as they alone know how to use it. In the Hands of such it is a common Blessing: But without Wisdom, a public Curse. And those who, like *Solomon*, thus make Wisdom *their first and early Choice*, do most effectually secure to themselves, through God's good Providence, the Addition of every Thing else, that is really good. I will just mention one more Circumstance; and that is,

6thly, The Effect which this Declaration from God in his Favour, had upon *Solomon*.

It filled him with Wonder and Thankfulness. *And Solomon awoke, and behold it was a Dream:—* He had seen and heard all Things so distinctly as though he had been awake; and when he awoke convinced him that it was an extraordinary Divine Vision. *And he came to Jerusalem, and stood before the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord; and offered Burnt-Offerings and Peace-Offerings*, in Token of his Thankfulness to God, for his extraordinary Condescension and Favour. (1). Particular Mercies call for particular Acknowledgments. And when God has remarkably interposed for us, the least we can do, is to return him our warmest Praise.

This was *Solomon's* Choice. And *these* are the most material Circumstances in it, that are worthy our Attention. I am satisfied there is none of us, but what admire *it*, and applaud him for it. But what then? It may seem, from the particular Circumstances attending it, to be a Case beyond Imitation. For who is in *Solomon's* Situation? Or who has ever had, or will have such an explicit Proposal made to him? I answer,

That the Spirit and Disposition here discovered is a very proper Subject of our Imitation: And what one would wish to see all young Persons animated and actuated by. The Piety towards God; the Honour shewn to his Parents; the Modesty and Humility with Regard to himself; the Moderation with Respect to the World; his prevailing Desire to fill up his Station in Life with proper Decorum and Usefulness; and his determined Choice of substantial Wisdom, before the outward gaudy Trappings of Life; or the Gratification of Passion; *these* are the amiable Qualities of a lovely Youth: And these come strongly and agreeably recommended by this Example. And the more advanced his Station was in Wealth or Power, with the more agreeable Attraction do they engage and draw us. And though we may not have such an express Offer made to us, as *Solomon* had, yet in a Sense all that are entering into Life, have their Choice to make: And, as it were, *Wisdom* on one Hand, and the *World* on the other offering them their Request: And
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it is in them to determine, which they will chuse, on which Side they will engage; and which shall principally direct and fix their Hearts, Desires, and Pursuits. And in Truth, it may be well for us, that such an explicit Proposal as *this*, is not made to us! Very few, I am afraid, are fit to be trusted so far! Very few would be able to quit the *certain* Offers of Power, Wealth, or the Gratification of a darling Passion! and to desire and embrace true Wisdom preferable to them all! Those I am sure would not, who prefer the *general* Offers of the World and Sin, *though fallacious and uncertain*, before *Religion* which is the *highest* Wisdom; and its *Gains*, which are the *greatest* and *surest*. It is *possible* (more than possible!) that any of us would greedily catch at such an Opportunity, to gratify Ambition, Covetousness, Pride, Luxury, or some predominant Passion, mischievous to others and fatal to ourselves; rather than desire the Guidance, Pleasures and Advantages of heavenly Wisdom! Like the Daughter of *Herodias* upon a Tryal something similar; who despised half a Kingdom, to gratify her Pride and Revenge (*m*). However so far as is left to our Choice, let us take Care to make a right one. With *Solomon* let *Wisdom* be the Subject of our *Choice* and *Request*. And in our Petitions to God, in our principal Desires, and most earnest Pursuits, let us prefer and follow it; before any external Emoluments,

(*m*) 6 Ch. Mark 23. ver. 25.

or sensitive Gratifications ; much more before the Pleasures and Gains of Sin. And this leads me

II. To accommodate this Example of *Solomon* to the immediate Intention and View of this Day's Service.

I mean ; To direct and press those that are *Young*, to make Choice of *true Wisdom* in its End, and its Means ; to embrace its Offers, to desire its Guidance, to follow its Dictates, as their governing Rule and determining View ; before any of the Proposals to direct their Conduct, and center their Aims, which this *World* or *Sin* can make.

And such an Address as this, is in the very Nature of it, adapted to the early Part of Life : Which is the Time for chusing : The Time for making our Party either with Wisdom or with the World : The Time for forming such Schemes ; and entering into such Engagements and Measures ; and proposing such Ends, as shall direct our future Conduct, and regulate our future Views. To *such* therefore, I would, with Plainness (and I can assure them with Sincerity) address myself. I hope they will attend to a kind and faithful Monitor and Friend : Proposing no Interest of my own, but their's : Offering them a Scheme, not of my own, but of everlasting Wisdom ; founded upon certain Truth and Experience, how to settle *best* in Life, in a still more important Sense than the Word is generally used : (though that *has* its Importance !) I mean ; to fix such
Prin-

Principles; to settle such Views; to propose such Rules, as shall have a good Effect, not only upon their present, but also upon their eternal Existence.

I suppose you do not wholly neglect Addresses to the God of Nature and Providence; the Giver of Wisdom; and the Disposer of all other Blessings. Prayer is so much the Language of Nature, that if there be not set Addresses, yet the Heart will be insensibly carried out, toward the great Over-ruler of all Things, for Success in what it is intent upon. When you therefore, occasionally or solemnly address him, make not the World the principal Object of your Request; Nor desire *in the first Place*, nor *over eagerly* the accumulating Wealth, the arriving at Honours, nor the attaining to any particular secular View. But, referring all *these* Things to God, chiefly and with the most ardent Desires, implore *that Wisdom*, which shall lead you to a right Conduct in Life; consistent with, and worthy of your Character; and *so* as to secure your most invaluable Interests.

Let me, again, suppose, that you are now forming Schemes for future Life: And that you do not set out altogether at Random. Some governing Point you fix your Eye upon: To the Attainment of which you propose to make other Things subservient. To some Riches; to others Honours, or Pleasures; and to others the most low and sordid Gratifications, are the View they set out with: The Mark at
which

which they aim. But be not *these* your final determining End. Set out in Life with an Intention and View to act up to the distinguishing, and most important Characters of Man, as a Servant of God; designed for Society; formed for Virtue; and capable of Immortality. Be your settled Aim therefore, in whatever Station of Life Providence shall place you, to do Honour to God; to be useful to others; to secure and promote your own Purity and Dignity; and to obtain eternal Bliss. By *these* regulate your Desires: Towards *these* direct your Aim: Let *nothing* be regarded in Opposition to them: Let *every Thing* be despised in Comparison with them. In a Word; instead of worldly Maxims being your Guide, and worldly Aims your principal End, set out desiring the Conduct of true Wisdom. Chuse her for the Guide of your Youth: Earnestly implore and diligently follow her Instructions: And prefer her Pleasures and Rewards, to any Offers that the World, Sense, and Sin can make. And that my Counsel may be acceptable, and come with the greater Weight, I shall with as much Brevity as I can, 1st, Describe to you that Wisdom which I would recommend. 2dly, Point out the real and superior Advantages of the Choice of it. And 3dly, Lay before you some Things, which are either Parts of it; or necessary to the Attainment of it.

As to the first of these, By *Wisdom*, I do not mean *bare Knowledge*: Or refined and sub-

sublime Speculation; of whatever Kind; or to whatever Degree it may be carried. For there may be *this* in the largest Compass, that the humane Mind is capable of, without any *true* Wisdom. And though *Knowledge* is by no Means to be slighted; but an Enquiry after it ought to be encouraged, as a noble Entertainment to the Mind, and a great Qualification for Usefulness; yet Care should be taken, that it be neither rested in nor misapplied; as it may be, and too often is: And when it is, wants the essential Ingredients of substantial Wisdom.

Much less by *Wisdom* do I mean, *Subtilty* and *Cunning*, in managing secular Affairs, with the Art of turning every Thing right or wrong to a *present Interest*. This is *worldly* Wisdom: And it is generally admired. It is the Policy and Method of those, who have fixed upon the World as their *End*: And to compass it, can shuffle and disguise; and make Use of little low Tricks of Fraud, and Circumvention. But it is a *mean* Part: And what you will always think beneath you to act, if you take true Wisdom for your Guide. *That* glories in Innocence, Integrity, Simplicity; while it is accompanied with Prudence and Discretion. *That* raises the Soul above a *mean* Thing: And prescribes no Maxims, proposes no Views, but what are consistent with a good Character, and a steady, right Conduct.

By *Wisdom* therefore I mean; the proposing to ourselves such an End, and the pursuing it by such Measures, as are worthy of, and consistent

sistent with the real and most important Characters and Relations which we sustain; and the most substantial Interests we have depending. Wisdom consists in proposing right Ends; and seeking the Attainment of them by right Means. It is the Wisdom of *Man* that we are enquiring after, Let us ask then, *What is Man?* Is he not a *Creature of God?* Dependent upon *him?* Subject to *his* Authority? And accountable to *his* Judgment? Is he not naturally formed to be a *Member of Society?* And invested with Dispositions and Affections, to desire and promote the Happiness of others? Is he not *rational* and *conscious?* endowed with a Love and Approbation of Virtue? With an Abhorrence and Condemnation of Vice? Is he not *Immortal?* And evidently designed to survive the present Period of his Existence, in a State infinitely more important? *These* are undeniably, the distinguishing and most honourable Characters and Relations of *Man*.

And what then is *his* Wisdom? Is it not to act up to the Dignity of his Nature? To fulfil the grand Design of his Being? And by a careful Attention to *these* Relations, and governing himself by *these* Obligations, to pursue the supreme Perfection and Happiness that he is capable of; and for which his Maker has formed and intended him? To sum up all therefore in one Word; *Religion* in its largest Sense, is *Wisdom*: The Beginning and Substance of true solid Wisdom. Its *Rules* are the

the Maxims, which every wise Man will conduct himself by. Its *Happiness* is the great and governing End, which every wise Man will propose to himself, and pursue (n). To serve and honour God; to be useful in our Station; to improve in universal Goodness; and so to prepare for Immortality, are the most important Measures we can pursue; the noblest End for which we can live. And he is the *wise Man*, who steadily keeps this End in view; who never wilfully neglects the Means; and who can bravely despise all lower Views and Pursuits in Comparison herewith. Upon *these Principles*, my Friends, would I persuade you to form your Minds: With *these Views* to set out in Life. Make *Religion* in its Means and its End, your first and early Care and Choice: And pray to God to give you more and more of this heavenly Wisdom.

And now, I presume, from this general Account of true Wisdom, the real and superior Advantages of it are very evident. So that I need not insist long upon the second Head, *viz.*

2dly. To point out to you the Advantages of such a Choice and Preference.

Perhaps our principal Schemes may have been worldly and secular. And we may set out in Life, determined, if possible upon Riches, Honours, or Pleasures as our *only Good*: Or at least as what we are eagerly and principally desirous to attain and possess: And *absolute Success* in these Measures and Views, is the Subject of

(n) 28 Job 28. 111 Psal. 10. 1 Prov. 7. 12 Eccl. 13, 14.

our Request to God. But indeed we know not what we ask: Perhaps may be only seeking Instruments to destroy ourselves: And our Request, if granted, may be our Disgrace and Ruin. For these Things are very far from being in themselves our *Happiness*: And are no further *valuable*, to any truly honourable and good Purposes, than according to the Temper with which we possess them; and the Uses to which we apply them. Let us then set out with moderate Affections, and Desires. Leave these Things to the all-wise God, without Anxiety or Distress; who knows *us* best; knows whether *they* are good for us; and what Kind or Degree of them we can bear. For our Parts, let it be our View and Choice, rather to be *good* than *great*: Rather *to behave well in our Stations*; than to *be eagerly ambitious of advancing them*. Or in one Word, rather desire to be *really* wise and happy; than to be *externally* and *deceitfully* so: And prefer solid Advantages before flashy Appearances. For indeed this Choice of heavenly Wisdom is the most advantageous. *This* is represented in a Variety of Passages in the sacred Writings. As I have not Time to quote them, I shall only recommend to your frequent Reading, and serious Consideration, the 3d Ch. of *Proverbs*: In which the Excellency and Advantages of Wisdom, are described with great Strength and Beauty; and in a Manner very fit to engage and attract the Hearts of those who are young, to a Love and Choice of her. The principal Advantages of such a Choice, which I shall

I shall mention ; (and have but Time just to mention) are these that follow.

1st. With regard to ourselves : It secures Peace and Tranquility of Mind : Frees us from the Outrages and Insults of Passion ; from disquieting Anxiety ; gnawing Covetousness ; unbounded Ambition ; brutal Lust ; pining Envy ; and tormenting Revenge. It affords us an even pleasant Rule to go by, through the Mazes of Life. It directs in the Paths of Serenity and Cheerfulness ; and secures Self-Approbation. It gives us friendly Warning of the Dangers that surround us ; and prevents Self-tormenting Remorse. It gives us the truest Enjoyment of present Good ; by adding to all the Sense of a Father's Love ; and teaching us how to enjoy them in the best Manner ; and apply them to the best Advantage. It fortifies the Mind against Disappointments from the World ; and leads us to be contented and happy without it.

2^{dly}. With respect to our Connections and Concern with others. It engages their Esteem : And secures true Honour and Respect from them. It renders us of Importance to the World : And valuable Members of the Society to which we belong. Wisdom diffuses its friendly Influences to others ; and makes them the better and the happier for us. Whereas without it a Man loses his Worth : and Wealth and Power are the Objects of Suspicion and Dread ; bear an unfriendly and malevolent Aspect : And only expose in a more glaring Light, the ill Qualities of their Possessor.

With

3dly. With respect to the great God ; and our Concerns with him : (which are of all others the most important :) Such an early Choice and Preference of Wisdom is peculiarly acceptable in his Sight : And secures his particular Blessing and Favour. And who can say or conceive the great Advantage resulting from hence ? How many Evils may his *Power* protect us from ? How many Dangers may it avert ? How many Difficulties may his *Wisdom* carry us through ? Prevent the fatal Mischiefs, which our Ignorance or Weakness might occasion ? And secretly direct to the best Purposes, Circumstances and Casualties, which are beyond the Reach of our Power and Knowledge ? How much may his Bounty and Goodness do for such ? In reward of their Preference of Wisdom, superadd other Things, so far as they are really Blessings : And annexing to all, such a Sense of his Loving-Kindness, as is better than Life itself ; and can make us happy with or without its Enjoyments. And I must add ;

4thly. That the Advantages of this Choice will be hereafter more signal and considerable. The *Worldling's* Choice will soon fail. And he that centers his Desires in Riches, Honours and Pleasures, will meet with a certain and miserable Disappointment. But *Wisdom* abides for ever : And will reward those who chuse her, with never-fading Honours ; never-ending Pleasures ; for Kind suited to the Nature of the Soul ; for Degree equal to its Capacities ; and for Duration commensurate with Immortality.

Such

Such are the unspeakable Advantages of this Choice. Let this determine all that are young to make it. Let not Wisdom court you in vain: Nor such solid Advantages be rejected for outside Shew, and empty Noise. Or rather I would suppose, that you *are* determined: That you *are* in good Earnest enquiring after Wisdom: And making her Ways, and her Rewards your first and early Choice. Would to God that this were the Case with more, with *all* who hear me! Some of you have been betimes entered herein: And to decline, will be worse than never to have known them! Remember, that Time runs waste; and the great Purpose of Life is neglected, till you engage in this Choice and Course: That you are accountable to God for your Opportunities and Abilities; which are all misimproved, till applied to this Purpose. And to direct and assist you in this Choice; which I proposed to do in the 3d Place; give me Leave to subjoin the following Things.

1/2 Endeavour after a right Knowledge of yourselves: Of your Weaknesses and Infirmities; and especially of whatever be the prevailing Passion or Inclination. Be at the same Time sensible of the Temptations that surround you; and your too great Proneness to fall in with them. This will guard against Pride, Security, and Self-Confidence: Than which nothing is more dangerous, nor yet more common. It will excite a constant Caution and Circumspection; for want of which, many unexperienced Minds have been

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unawares seduced and corrupted. It will best prepare the Soul for divine Teaching : And dispose it to desire and submit to Wisdom's Rules. And on the other Hand, know also your own Importance and Value. Remember what you are : And what great Things you are capable of, and intended for. This will inspire you with an Ambition to follow the Maxims, and prefer the Honours of true Wisdom : Raise your Views and Pursuits above a World that is far beneath yourselves : Lead you to scorn any base servile Compliances with or for the sake of it : And give you a Spirit too noble to suffer itself to be degraded by sinking into Earthliness and Sensuality.

2. Endeavour to form a just Estimate of the World ; and what it proposes : And compare it with your own Capacities for Enjoyment and Happiness. It is for want of knowing the World better ; and by viewing only the Surfaces of Things, that so many sacrifice Wisdom and its Rewards to it. Whereas a more thorough Knowledge of it, of what it is in itself, and of what it can do for us, will prevent our being carried away, by the specious Appearance it makes : And teach us, that as it is not our supreme Good, so neither should it have our supreme Choice and Regard. Again ;

Let not the immoderate Love of Pleasure enter into your Mind ; and be very cautious, how far, and what Kinds hereof you indulge yourselves in. An excessive Fondness for, and Indulgence to Pleasures of the sensitive Kind, will damp the

the heavenly Principle of Wisdom : Will spoil the Taste and Relish for its Pleasures : And render the Mind, too soft to admit of her Discipline ; too weak to follow her Rules ; too sensual to partake of her Joys. *This* is the Bait, that ruins many an unwary Mind ; that robs Wisdom of many of her Votaries ; that entangles many in Destruction and Perdition. And as this is so much the prevailing Fashion *now*, I think it is better, (and a becoming Self-diffidence will think so too ; far better) to deny ourselves some perhaps in themselves lawful Liberties ; than to run the Hazard, of drinking too deep of the intoxicating, enchanting Potion.

I would also advise, that you would be very careful in the Choice of your Company. For there is something in *this*, that is insensibly insinuating ; that has a prodigious Force in forming the Temper and Manners ; and especially that unawares steals upon and bends young, pliant Minds ; who are unsuspicious of Danger ; and love to be agreeable to those with whom they converse. Decline therefore, as much as possible, all Intimacy and Familiarity with those, who have no Regard to the Ways of Wisdom : Who will make a Jest of Sin ; and banter Tendernefs of Conscience and a Regard to Principle. Who laugh at and despise Wisdom, only because it is too high for them. Who know nothing but sensual Gratification : And look no further or higher, than the Brute.

If these entice thee, consent thou not. If these pretend to ridicule thee, regard them not. Their Contempt, do thou esteem an Honour. Their prophane Jokes affect not thee, but turn upon themselves. Associate with the Wise and Good, so shalt thou learn their Ways; and secure thy Soul from a Snare. Avoid the other as a Plague; least thou insensibly catch the Infection. Remember, that he that walketh with wise Men shall be wise; but a chosen Companion of Fools shall be destroyed with them (o). Further;

Receive the Advice, yea take kindly the Cautions and Reproofs of those, who have more Knowledge and Experience of Mankind and the World, than yourselves. Nay, in some Cases, be willing to follow implicitly their Cautions; even though your own Rawsness and Inexperience, may not at once see the Necessity or Expediency of them. I know the Pride and Self-sufficiency of Youth is apt to recoil at this Advice: And to deem such Cautions as officious or ill-natur'd. But where there is tried Love and approved Integrity, accompanied with superior Wisdom, and longer Experience, we should not mistrust them; but rather suspect ourselves. And where the Cautions and Advices of such have been slighted through a Pride of Heart, or an impetuous or impatient Temper, the Reflection of future

(o) 13. Prov. 20.

Experience has often been, "I wish I had followed them."

Converse much and seriously with the Word of God. Not so much for Reading, Entertainment and Speculation, as to learn true Wisdom from thence. For *that* contains a glorious Treasury of it: The best Rules of Wisdom: And the best Motives, to engage our Love and Choice of it. And finally;

Accompany all with your fervent Prayers to God, the Giver of Wisdom: That he would instruct, guide and establish you in it; With that Sense of your own Need of it; and of its Excellence, Value and Importance, as so remarkably discovers itself in this Prayer of *Solomon*.

And now I will close all with an earnest Charge to Parents in the Name of God: That they do betimes enter, and carefully train up, their Children in the Ways of Wisdom: And in their future Disposals of them, always keep this Point in View. A Defect here is setting out wrong. And the Measures pursued in Consequence of this Neglect, are so many Deviations from the Road to Happiness. And yet how many are culpable in this Respect? What wrong Plans of Education do many form and proceed upon? The Fineries, Poms and Pleasures of Life, are the first Things our Children are taught to admire, and be in love with, and value themselves upon. Sensual Indulgences, or the Gratification of a darling Passion are made their Reward! We pamper Pride; are pleased

with their Tricks of Subtilty and Cunning; and encourage and teach them Revenge! And upon this fatal Scheme we proceed, in our future Disposals of them! The principal if not sole View is, how they may best make their Fortune, and grow Great and Rich! As if this World was the chief Good: And Religion and their Souls were only to be minded by the bye! Thus we sow the Seeds, and promote the Growth of Envy, Discontent, worldly Mindedness, Ambition and Sensuality! While Wisdom is left to spring up of itself; or to be sowed by Chance! And then to excuse our own Folly and Cruelty, we complain of the Corruption of humane Nature; and the Degeneracy of the World! But give me leave to press it upon you, who have chose Wisdom yourselves, to inculcate it upon your Children: And to begin *first*, with implanting its Principles in their Minds: For these are suited to the earliest Stages of rational Life: And when once settled, will not be easily rooted out. Shew them therefore its Excellency and Importance; and how inseparably true Honour, Pleasure, and Happiness are connected with it. Enter them into its School betimes; accustom them to its Rules; and improve their Taste; and encrease their Value for its Rewards, by setting them before their View. Take off the false Colourings in which the World appears: And before-hand obviate and so guard them against the

the Prejudices, too generally conceived against Wisdom and her Ways. Give them just Sentiments of their own real Character; and how much it becomes them to act up to it: And right Notions of their true Happiness; in what it consists; and how to attain it. And especially, let them see Wisdom shine, with a Light and Lustre becoming itself, in your own Example; displaying its genuine Fruits, with an attracting Grace, in your Temper and Conduct. So may we hope to see our Children wise and happy; useful and beloved: Our Comfort and Joy; and the Delight of others: An Honour to our Names and Memory: And, which is best of all, may form the ravishing Prospect, of having them at last share with ourselves, the unspeakable Honours and Rewards of true Wisdom, in the everlasting Approbation and Favour of God.

And if my Wish might avail, this would be the happy Lot of every Parent and every Child who heard; or into whose Hands this Discourse shall fall,

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